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# Alums Co-author Major Fusion Center Study

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# Alums Co-author Major Fusion Center Study

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Continued education and conducting more periodic threat domain assessments are two of the needs identified in a recently released study on fusion centers that was co-authored by two alumni of Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS) educational programs.

"Counterterrorism Intelligence: Fusion Center Perspectives" was released June 26 by George Washington University's Homeland Security Policy Institute.

Among the study's co-authors is Los Angeles Deputy Police Chief Michael Downing, a graduate of CHDS' Executive Leaders Program, and Deputy Commissioner of the Utah Department of Public Safety Keith Squires, a Center master's degree and also completed the Fusion Center Leaders Program graduate. The pair penned the study along with HSPI Director Frank J. Cilluffo and HSPI Policy Analyst Dr. Joseph R. Clark. The authors recommend greater resources be allocated to the professional development of those working in the centers.

The survey shows terrorism remains at the forefront of fusion center concerns: Sixty-five percent of fusion center personnel surveyed state that homegrown jihadi terrorism poses the greatest terror threat in their jurisdiction, while 78 percent expect the threat from terror to continue, according to the study.

However, Downing contends more threat domain assessments are needed to precisely identify concerns individual fusion centers face. Only three in 10 surveyed had conducted such assessments.

"I think you cannot rely on threat domains established on a national basis, you need to drill down into your own region," Downing said. "You need to develop standing information. We're saying if only 30 percent are doing threat assessments, we have not developed a good path to prioritize threat domains."

The study also found that fusion centers have yet to be invested with the analytical skill-craft and training necessary for them to accomplish their mission. The authors recommend greater resources be allocated to the professional development of those working in the centers.

Downing and Squires agree that educational instruction such as that offered through CHDS' Fusion Center Leaders Program is needed to improve intelligence collection and analysis. The course brings different cohorts of fusion leaders to CHDS twice yearly for a week-long session focusing on best practices. The program enables practitioners to learn from subject-matter experts as well as from one another.

"Their (practitioner's) perspectives and ideas are critical to mapping the future of this national network and ensuring its longevity," noted Squires, an alumnus of the FCLP and the Master's Degree program. "It is my hope that this research report will assist decision makers at various levels in identifying the great value of the work being currently accomplished by fusion centers and the increased future potential that can be made available through focused investments."



